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Die Mercantile 1704

**Bishop of CHESTER'S**  
**SERMON**  
Preach'd before the  
**HOUSE OF LORDS**

*May the 29th, 1704.*  
MATT. JOHNSON,  
Cler. P. M. Licent.

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*Die Mercurii 2 Junii 1704.*

**O**Rdered by the Lords Spi-  
ritual and Temporal in Parlia-  
ment Assembled. That the Thanks  
of this House be, and they are  
hereby given to the Lord Bishop of  
*Chester*, for his Sermon Preached  
before this House on the Twenty  
ninth Day of *May* last. And he is  
hereby desired to print and pub-  
lish the same.

MATTH. JOHNSON,  
*Cler' Parliamentor'*



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# S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

HOUSE of LORDS

AT THE

ABBAY-CHURCH

IN

WESTMINSTER,

On Saturday, MAY 29, 1714.

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By the RIGHT REVEREND Father in GOD,  
FRANCIS, Lord Bishop of CHESTER.

*Gastrell*

L O N D O N :

Printed by W. B. for HENRY CLEMENTS at the *Half-Moon*  
in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1714.



SEERMON

Preach'd before the

HOUSE of LORDS

AT THE

ABBAY-CHURCH



WESTMINSTER

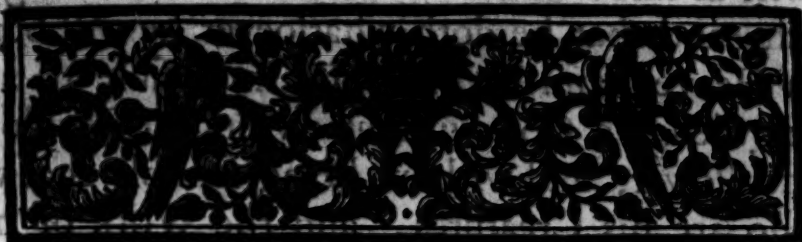
On Sunday, May 19, 1714.

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,  
FRANCIS, Lord Bishop of Chester.

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PROV. xxi. 31.

*There is no Wisdom, nor Understanding, nor Counsel against the Lord.*

**T**HE full Import and Meaning of these Words is, that all our Counsels and Designs, whatever appearing Grounds of Wisdom and Probability they may carry with them, are vain and ineffectual, and shall certainly be brought to nought, if they are not agreeable to the Ends of Divine Providence. If God be against us, neither Skill, nor Force, nor all the Art and Contrivance that the united Wisdom of Men is capable of, can stand us in any stead, or be any way serviceable for the compassing and effecting what we undertake.

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There's no need of proving this Point to such as know and believe that the Lord reigneth, and that he doth whatsoever he will both in Heaven and Earth. 'Tis impossible to acknowledge a God without owning his Wisdom and Power, and without being sensible that we who are his Creatures, and the Work of his Hands, have both the Will, and the Power to think, and do from him, and therefore must depend upon him for the Success of all our Actions, who giveth to every Enterprize and Device such an Event as it pleaseth him.

And yet, notwithstanding the Certainty and general Belief of this Doctrine, we see in Fact that the greatest part of Mankind are continually carrying on Designs against the express Orders of God, and the positive Appointments of Providence. And tho' they are often reprov'd for their Presumption by a visible Overthrow and Defeat of all their Counsels, yet will they not take Warning; but, still relying upon their own Wisdom and Power, their inward Thought is, that they shall at last succeed, and that their Houses shall continue for ever, and their Dwelling-places to all Generations. *This their way is their Folly, and yet their Posterity approve them Saying, and go on to build*

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build upon the same sandy Foundations which had so often failed their Forefathers.

The Subject then of my following Discourse, upon the Words I have now read to you, shall be, to shew you

*First*, What those Counsels and Designs are which are frequently pursued by Men, and yet are against the Lord, and how signally God hath been pleased for the most part to disappoint them.

*Secondly*, I shall shew you what an eminent Instance we have of God's interposing to defeat the wicked and unjust Attempts of Man, in the Occasion of this Day's Solemnity.

*Thirdly*, I shall consider what Use we ought to make, both of the general Doctrine, and the particular Instance here given.

I. In the first Place then I am to shew you what those Counsels and Designs are, which are frequently pursued by Men, and yet are against the Lord, and how signally God hath been pleased for the most part to disappoint them.

Now the most certain and most general Rule of judging of the Designs of Men by is this; that such as are not for the Lord are against him,



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him, and consequently will be defeated by him; All those humane Projects and Contrivances which have not Religion for their End, and have no Tendency toward the promoting of Piety and Vertue in the World, are contrary to the Will of God; forasmuch as they do not only contradict his Design and Intention in making us, but his express Command to us in his revealed Word *to do all things to his Glory and our own Salvation.*

To multiply Knowledge; to heap up Riches and increase our Store; to promote our selves to great Honour; to enlarge our Command, to continue our Lands or our Names for ever: These and the like Designs, which take up most of the Thoughts of those who are accounted among the wiser and better sort of Mankind, when there is nothing else aimed at but the immediate Pleasure of succeeding, and being known to succeed; every thing, I say, of this Nature, is in such a Case to be lookt upon as an Undertaking against the Lord, tho' the Methods made use of to bring it about be as fair, and just, and consistent with Religion, as can be imagined; because 'tis founded in Vanity, Ambition, Covetousness, or some other irregular Appetite or Desire, which God hath ordered

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ordered us either to restrain, or to employ some other way.

But if we make use of wicked and ungodly Means for the obtaining improper and unsuitable Ends; if we do not only intend no Good, but do Evil in order to promote our unprofitable Intentions; if we endeavour to advance our Interest or our Power by Fraud, Cruelty, or Oppression, or do any other way break through the Laws of God, in order to forward the Execution of the like worldly and vain Designs: This is a more open and direct declaring against the Lord.

But the highest and most notorious Opposition that is made by the Sons of Men, against their Lord and Maker, is, when they persecute and oppose the Righteous, when they make War upon the Servants of God, and endeavour what they can to hinder the Growth of Piety and Virtue, to corrupt the Truth and Purity of Religion, and to propagate and establish such Sins and Abominations in the World as the Lord abhorreth, and are directly contrary to the Gospel of his Son.

These are the Counsels and Designs, which, however laid and carried on, with all the Advantages of human Art and Wisdom, shall ne-

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ver stand or prevail, but shall certainly, sooner or later, according as best answers the Ends of Divine Providence, be confounded and destroyed; and it shall be known that the Lord hath done it: For he shall arise and disappoint the Devices of the Wicked, when, according to Man's Judgment, they were in the fairest Likelihood of taking Effect.

We have abundance of Instances of God's interposing in such a wonderful manner for the Vindication of his own Honour, and to convince Mankind of the Folly and Weakness of all their Attempts which are made without his particular Favour and Assistance.

Every Man that looks abroad must have Examples enough before him of such as have been labouring all their Lives for such Ends as they have been defeated in at last; nor only contrary to the Expectation, but contrary to all Appearances of Success. Those whom we have formerly seen in great Power, and spreading themselves like a green Bay-Tree, lo! if we seek them now they are gone; if we pass by that way where their Glory appeared, they are not to be found; neither are there any Signs or Tokens of their Power and Greatness left; their Houses and Lands are called by other



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their Names, and there is no Remembrance of their Works.

The same Observation recurs in many Instances of private Life; where those who have been accounted wise in their Generation, and have used all ways, both good and bad, without Restraint, to compass their Desires, have by unexpected and unaccountable Methods been over-ruled in their Designs, and have fallen from their Hopes, when they thought themselves most sure of their Point, and had no Apprehensions of being baffled.

But, if we enlarge our Views, and consider the greater and more remarkable Lines of Providence in the Disposition and Conduct of the Affairs of Mankind, as they make up one Body together, or are divided into several Kingdoms and Nations; there we shall meet with plainer and more astonishing Marks of the Weakness and Vanity of all human Wisdom, when it sets itself against the Lord, or pretends to establish any thing without him.

Now the great Men of the Earth, who have had the chief Direction of human Affairs committed to them, have commonly employ'd all the Art, and Skill, and Understanding they cou'd command, upon one of these two Occasions,

either to enlarge the Bounds of their Empire, or to propagate the Belief of their Superstition. Their main Design and Contrivance has been, either to enslave the Persons, or to subdue the Understandings of as many of their Brethren as they possibly could, in Pursuance of all those false Notions of Honour and Zeal which have done so much Mischief in the World, by the publick Credit that has been given to them in all Ages and Countries.

But what are now become of all those mighty Projects, which have upon their Pedestals been consecrated by Obedience, and by the most solemn Vows, the advanced, by the most illustrious Captains, and have been endangered from one end of the World by their extraordinary Conquests, (Gaudery) and Wisdoms? What Signification has there now remaining, that this was the Empire which established in the World the History, the Story of their valiant Deeds, and of their Books? And was it not, as I said, the Boy of God? Before say of their overthrow, that they should be broken and overthrown in the manner in which it afterwards happened to them. To what purpose then was the Counsel and Wisdom of their Conquerors, who disturbed the Peace and Quiet of the World, re-

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be taken notice of for a time, and to be quickly after forgotten, and to have all the Monuments of their glorious Deeds defaced and scattered upon the Face of the Earth!

Neither have the Counsels and Designs of the Wicked and Superstitious succeeded any better against the Church of God. For, notwithstanding the Conspiracy of the Jewish Rulers, and the Madness of that People, the Doctrine of Christ took Root among them; and in spite of all the Persecutions of the Roman Emperors and their Ministers, it prevailed, and was firmly established.

And although they took care to keep the Kingdom of God from being known, there was a great and universal Empire set up over the Conscience of Man, the pure Light of the Gospel made a great illumination in a great part of it; so that all the Policies and Tricks of the Roman Emperors, and their Ministers, were not able to keep the Kingdom of God from being known. And although they took care to keep the Kingdom of God from being known, there was a great and universal Empire set up over the Conscience of Man, the pure Light of the Gospel made a great illumination in a great part of it; so that all the Policies and Tricks of the Roman Emperors, and their Ministers, were not able to keep the Kingdom of God from being known.

But to come nearer home, and to give you a more sensible and lasting Proof of the constant Certainty of what is affirmed in the Text, that *There is no Wisdom, nor Understanding, nor*

*Counsel*



...that it should not be in the Power  
of Man to throw it down. To this End and  
Purpose, all the Wisdom and Force, which the  
Enemies of our happy Constitution were Ma-  
sters of, were for many Years employed with  
great Vigour and Application, and not without  
great Appearance of Success. All the several  
Forms of Government that could be invented  
were tryed one after another; all the Cunning  
and



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Tho' the Administration at home was weak and uncertain, by a continual change of Measures, and shifting of Hands, yet Matters were so ordered with relation to foreign Interests and Concerns, that those who were in Possession of Power, and those who were struggling to get it into their own Hands, had liberty to quarrel among themselves, without fearing any Disturbance from abroad. And, as by this means the Royal Family were deprived of all hope of Assistance from any neighbouring Princes or States; so likewise such constant Care was taken to weaken and oppress all the Friends to the Royal Cause; and such Diligence was used to discover and crush all Designs in behalf of Monarchy, or any thing that lookt like an advance towards the ancient Form of Government; that not long before the *Restoration*, it was the general Opinion of all that wished well to their Country, and prayed for the Peace of our *Jerusalem*, that their Cause was desperate; and that nothing but a miraculous interposition of Providence could turn their Captivity, and establish them again in the quiet Possession of their own Land, and of the Laws and Religion of their Fore-fathers. And then it was that God was graciously pleased to interpose for our Deliverance, and with



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*with his own right Hand, and his Arm, and the light of his Countenance* to work a mighty Salvation for us. Then it was that God delighted to shew himself, when no humane means of Relief appear'd; and when the Eyes of his faithful Servants were not able to see beyond the dark Cloud that covered them.

And that *this was the Lord's doing*, to overturn the Counsels of the Crafty and Deceitful, and to beat down the strong Holds of the mighty Ones, because they had set themselves in Opposition to him: That all the Counsel, Wisdom, and Understanding, made use of for the breaking and dissolving the long established Government of this Nation, and supporting the new Powers set up in its stead, were employed against the Lord, and were therefore confounded and brought to nought: This, I say, is manifest, not only from that variety of Misery, Destruction and Confusion, which were the immediate Effects of those violent Changes; but from the many vain Attempts that were made by the Contrivers of all this Wickedness and Mischief, to engage Providence on their side. They did not pretend to act in Defiance of God and his Authority; but they continually sought the Lord, and applied to him with as great

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Earnestness and Confidence as if they had been doing his Work, and were acting by his immediate Commission. And that no Weapons, either *spiritual*, or *carnal*, might be wanting in that desperate Warfare they were carrying on, they thinned their Religion as often as they did their Government, and found out as many ways of worshipping God, as of oppressing Men. But this it was that chiefly provoked the Lord to Anger, and stirred up his fiercest Indignation against them; for they came to him with their

Vengeance for their great Hypocrisy, and for their many false and unworthy Notions of the Almighty, that God destroyed all the Idols of Power which they had set up, and defaced all the Images of Holiness and Piety which they had made to themselves; and restored us to that State of Peace  
and

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and Order and Religion which we enjoyed before, and which by a long and terrible Experience, we were convinced was the happiest State that we could enjoy.

3. I come now in the third and last Place to consider, what use we ought to make both of the general Doctrine, and of the particular Instance here before us.

The Application of the general Doctrine to

the particular Instance here before us

is to be made in the following Manner

Our Side, in every thing we undertake, is to

undertake nothing but what we are sure is agreeable to his Revealed Will; not to be wise

above what is written; *not to do Evil that Good*

*may come*; and never to advance beyond the Posts which Providence hath assigned us, what-



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ever Prospect of Success may invite us farther.

And, as to our Conduct with relation to Publick Affairs, so far as it concerns the general Interest of that Body to which we belong; it is all comprized in this short Rule given us by the Wise Man, *Fear God, and honour the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.*

And great Reason certainly have we to fear God, who as upon this Day delivered us from the hardest Tyranny and Bondage that any Nation was ever subject to; who restored a People scattered and peeled to their former Rights and Possessions; who healed a Kingdom broken and divided, and made it at Unity in itself; and who gave us Kings as at the first, when the honourable Men of the Earth bore Rule, and Priests as in former Times, when the Gospel of Christ was preached in Truth and Purity.

And as we ought to fear God who hath been thus gracious to us, and express our Thankfulness to him by a sober and religious Improvement of all his Mercies; so ought we in the next Place to honour *the Queen* whom he hath now set over us, by whose careful Administration, under God, we are preferred in  
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the full Enjoyment of those invaluable Blessings which were upon this Day restored to us. Her unaffected Piety towards God, Her constant Concern for Her People, and Her great Self-denial in sacrificing all Private Interests and Pleasures to the Publick Good, have engaged the Lord on Her Side; and the surest way to share with Her in the Divine Protection is to follow Her Example, by submitting our selves entirely to the Direction of the supreme Wisdom, and by a general and hearty Concurrence with Her in such Counsels and Designs as are agreeable to the Law of God, and in the Prosecution of such Measures, and such only, as He hath allowed us to make use of.

Let us not therefore have any thing to do with *those who are given to change*. Let the Remembrance of this Happy Day be a constant Warning to us, not to tread in any of those Steps of our Forefathers, which gave Occasion for this Deliverance. Let the Sense we have of our present Happiness give us such a due Concern for the Preservation of all those Rights and Privileges of which we now stand possessed, that we may use all lawful Means to keep them entire, and transmit them safe to  
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Posterity; that so neither we, nor our Children to all Generations, may know any other Religion, or any other Form of Government, than what are now established among us. In order to which End, may this mild and gentle Reign be long continued to us; and may the Glories gained by War, and the Blessings obtained by Peace, be succeeded by such a Train of virtuous and religious Improvements, as may give a natural Strength to our State, and intitle us to the constant Defence and Protection of the Almighty.

These are such Thoughts as the Subject of this Day's Solemnity ought to suggest to us: And this is the most proper time to entertain them, when the Spirits of Men are disturbed with the same Fears and Apprehensions that distracted the Minds of our Forefathers; when their Passions are at the same Heighth; and when they are formed into Parties of the same Nature and Tendency, however distinguished in Name: This, I say, is the most proper Season for us all to look back upon the Times past, and consider the first Openings of that dreadful Scene of Confusion and Misery, which for many Years overspread this Nation; that so we may take Care, that we do not by unreasonable



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able Fears and Jealousies, aggravated Representations of publick Failures, and precipitate Measures of Redress, throw away that Happiness which we have in our Hands, for fear of losing it hereafter; and destroy that Government we are fond of upon a vain Prospect of rendring it more perfect. I do not say that all Fear and Jealousy upon a Publick Account are improper: On the contrary, I think it becomes all the Lovers of our Constitution to be afraid of losing it, and to be jealous of any Attempts that may be made to rob us of any part of it. But we ought at the same time, as it becomes wise Men, to examine well the Grounds of our Apprehensions, and to be able to prove before we begin to complain. It is likewise our Duty, as good Subjects, to put a favourable Construction upon the Actions of our Prince, and never give way to Suspicions contrary to a settled Character, and solemn Declarations. And whenever any real Danger to the Publick appears, and whatever Faults of Consequence may be discovered in the Administration, the Methods made use of to prevent the one, and cure the other, ought to be managed with that Caution, and with that due Regard to the present Circumstances of the Nation,

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Nation, that we may not, as our Forefathers did, (many of whom proceeded at first with as great Uprightness of Intention as can be now pretended to) bring upon our selves, and our Posterity, more Evils than what we endeavour to remove.

Thus it behoves us to remember the former Days, *that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom. And may God who hath done so great things for us already, whereof we rejoyce, go on to do us Good, and dispose us all to such proper Returns of Praise and Obedience, as may secure us his Favour here, and bring us to his eternal Joy hereafter.*

F I N I S.

